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What Was the Meaning of Duterte? (Fantasy and Normalized Emergency Post-EDSA)

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ABSTRACT

Several months into this return to a Marcos rule that we thought we had foresworn and forestalled, we are yet to grapple with the slaughters and plunders of the past Duterte administration. But this present worrisome political regime is precisely enabled by the previous fatal Duterte government. To understand this Marcos regime, then, we must clarify the meaning of Duterte's rule with finality and demonstrate its place in the cycle of violence and corruption that is our politics. And so, we need to ask, what was/is the meaning of Duterte? To ask this question is to set aside the commonplace move of pointing to the obvious referent and thinking of the name "Duterte" as a sign. In this paper, we are particularly interested in the sign Duterte as indicating a coherent shared understanding and as a practical efficiency. As such, we examine two consistent meanings for Duterte: first, Duterte is the sign of the ideological deployment of middle-class fantasy, as both the bearer and the obscene means of our agency—borne of 1986 EDSA but subsequently lost. Second, Duterte is the name for the continuous experience of normalized emergency—specifically as state terror and militarized pandemic response.

Keywords: Duterte, ideology, middle-class fantasy, state terror, normalized emergency, pandemic response

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that accords with this insight. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism. One reason fascism has a chance is that, in the name of progress, its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are "still" possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge—unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.

Walter Benjamin, from "On the Concept of History"

Several months into this reversal to a Marcos rule—now recognizably inept (Morales; Santos; Magsambol), crooked (Rubio, Valente), and brutal (Zablan; Patag; Buan, "What Marcos Excluded")—that we thought we have defeated and foresworn, we are yet to grapple with the plunders and slaughters of the past Duterte administration. And we are, again, in danger of conceding this disaster to the nation's forgetfulness. After all, we must contend with the daily demands of a potentially more catastrophic governance. But this troubling and dreaded political regime was precisely enabled by the ruinous Duterte government. The nostalgia for an iron-fisted rule—largely middle-class, uncritical, and phantasmatic—is to blame for getting Duterte elected in 2016. And the post-EDSA regimes, from Corazon "Cory" Aquino to her son Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, paved the way for Duterte's victory in that presidential election. To understand this newly elected Marcos regime (i.e., the regime of the son of former Ferdinand Marcos) then, we must clarify the meaning of Duterte's rule with finality and demonstrate its place in the cycle of violence and corruption that is Philippine state politics.

And so, what was (and is) the meaning of Duterte? To ask this question is to set aside exactly who we are thinking of right now, and instead think of "Duterte" as a name or a sign.

A common way to think about a *name* or *sign* is to ask what it names—its referent, what it stands for. Generally, there are three ways to do this. First, we can think of the name or sign as corresponding to things, objects, or bodies. Here, we can briefly bring back the commonsense referent of the term "Duterte" that we have previously set aside. But second, we can think of the sign as representing a coherent shared understanding. Hence, "Duterte" is a list of predicates such as misogynist, corrupt, fascist, inept, blathering, blustering, *kulambo*-comforted, popular, and so on—terms which can be seen to mostly agree with each other, at the same time as they sometimes work in contrast, but overall cohered into an understanding we generally accept. And third, we can think of the name as referring to a practical efficiency—how it works in reality. Hence, for "Duterte": 5,000 killed officially, 12,000 killed if we count more judiciously, 30,000 plus killed and this figure must exactly be our outrage (Coronel et al.). Also, billions in tax money were plundered (Buan, "COA"; Romero, "PhilHealth"), at the same time as there was a consistently high satisfaction rating for Duterte even when he was besieged by criticism (Ranada; Lalu, "Ex.Pres."), and so on. In this essay, we are interested in these last two ways of thinking about the name: Duterte as a coherent shared understanding, and Duterte as a practical efficiency.

Thus, we can now initially state here the two senses of "Duterte" that we will carefully examine in the next sections: first, *Duterte was the name for the then ideological deployment of middle-class fantasy—as both the bearer and the obscene means of*

our lost agency. And second, *Duterte was the name for the continued experience of normalized emergency—of state terror and militarized pandemic response*.

The structure of our domination is a question of what exists and how we know. But before we proceed, let us first establish our theoretical framework. Figure 1 shows that the structure of our domination is a matter of how we are conscious of and come to know what exists.

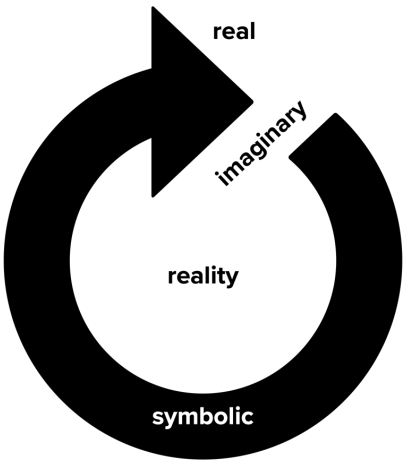

Fig. 1. The structure of our domination.

What we see here is a simple model of the dialectics of Jacques Lacan's three registers of reality that Slavoj Zizek recurrently deploys (see "Foreword," "A Hair of the Dog," *Pandemic!*). Following Lacan and Zizek, we can think of the *Real* as the multiplicity (of differences) that present to our understanding. We understand this diversity as gestured, signed or named, and ordered within a system of representation. This system is the *Symbolic* order—it is made up of gestures, languages, norms, rules, institutions, cultures, structures of organization, and so on. Alenka Zupančič stresses that the Symbolic is not simply a tool or a medium that we deploy to understand or see reality, but as structures, are already part of reality ("To Enjoy is to Trespass" 1:20).

The dynamic processes of the Symbolic attempt to represent the Real as an *All*. But this representation ultimately fails as there is always something that is persistently unsaid, as an inventory of descriptions will not exhaust a beloved, as there is always a difference to any making of a whole: a "limit is inscribed into [language] in the guise of ruptures in which the process of enunciation intervenes in the enunciated" (Zizek, "Foreword" xiii). These ruptures or gaps in the countless combinations of symbols that are never enough, this absence in our knowledge, are the void of the Real (Zupančič, *What is Sex?* 41-43). It is also the place of the

Imaginary, a particular deployment of a series of signs or symbols that stands in for the void of the Real (Zizek, "Foreword" xii). The Imaginary functions in two ways: it hides the traumatic void of the Real, and it appears to complete the Symbolic's representation of All.

For Zizek, the place of the Imaginary is precisely the place of ideology. It is the fictive and phantasmatic deployment of Symbolic parts into a rationalization of a particular reality. Together, the Symbolic and the Imaginary structure our understanding and experience of this reality ("Between Symbolic" 292-94).

The first answer to our question (i.e., "What is the meaning of Duterte") then—that Duterte is the name for the current ideological deployment of middle-class fantasy—will require us to consider related concepts that are critical to the application of our framework in the following quote from Zizek:

> There are … two complementary procedures of the 'criticism of ideology': one is discursive, the 'symptomal reading' of the ideological text bringing about the 'deconstruction' of the spontaneous experience of its meaning—that is, demonstrating how a given ideological field is a result of a montage of heterogeneous 'floating signifiers,' of their totalization through the intervention of certain 'nodal points'; the other aims at extracting the kernel of enjoyment, at articulating how—beyond the field of meaning but at the same time internal to it—an ideology implies, manipulates, produces a pre-ideological enjoyment structured in fantasy. (*The Sublime* 140; see also Zupančič, "To Enjoy" 24:14)

Let us approach both procedures through that of the second—through *fantasy* and *enjoyment*, and the *desire* that traverses them.

Fantasy = ($ ◇ *a*). This is Lacan's formula for fantasy: the subject is barred from itself, which is experienced as a lack, and object *a*—a formal frame of consistency that allows a sequence of objects to be *a*—stand-in for this lack (Zizek, *Tarrying* 14; see also Zupančič, "The End of Fantasy" 21:10). Or, the Symbolic is barred by its void and fantasy resolves this impasse through the supplement object *a*. For the barred subject—*a* can be a series of subject positions or social roles: son/daughter, believer, student, citizen, and so on. For the barred Symbolic—*a* can be a series of master signifiers that place us firmly into our social roles: family, religion, university, nation, or people, and so on.

Meanwhile, enjoyment for Zizek is the supreme value of the times. "Today," he says, "we are bombarded from all sides by different versions of the injunction 'Enjoy!', from direct enjoyment in sexual performance to enjoyment in professional

achievement or spiritual awakening. Enjoyment today effectively functions as a strange ethical duty: individuals feel guilty not for violating moral inhibitions by way of engaging in illicit pleasures, but for not being able to enjoy" (*How to Read Lacan* 104, Zupančič, "To Enjoy" 24:14).

Desire, lastly, is the difference between need and demand. In a child, for example, it is the articulation of need and, beyond it, the insistence for love or recognition. Desire is a lack—it is something we do not have, an absence in us—and its satisfaction is always deferred or held at bay. Thus, desire moves us into action. But when it is identified, we are defined. This is because desire determines being *subject*—as both being the *subject of* an agency and being *subject to* ideology. Within ideology's structured social reality, because we do not usually know what we desire, we are left with the question "what do you really want from me?" Our desire becomes the other's desire. And since others do not know their desire as well, our desire becomes the desire of the Other—of our parents, of society, the state, or the Big Other. As such, it traverses enjoyment, the pleasure of desire, and fantasy—its social determination and fulfillment (Zizek, *For They Know* 61-72).

Let us look closely at the gap of the Real that is also the place for the Imaginary. Zizek tells us that there are two kinds of fantasy: f1 or symbolic fiction rationalizes away the gap in our knowledge or the anxiety of not knowing who we are through master signifiers that pull together diverse, and sometimes contradictory, representations into a coherent understanding. Hence, the many contentious identities in society are unified through the master signifiers "nation" or "people." And if this does not work, which is usually the case, f2 or the fantasmatic spectre becomes the obstruction that explains away the failure: we cannot be a people because of the ignorant masses, or we cannot be a nation because of narco-politics and corruption. Interestingly, the spectre is also a putative common enemy that forges us into unity ("Between Symbolic" 241-245). Figure 2 offers a closer look at how the imaginary works—the imaginary deployment of the symbolic as fantasy.

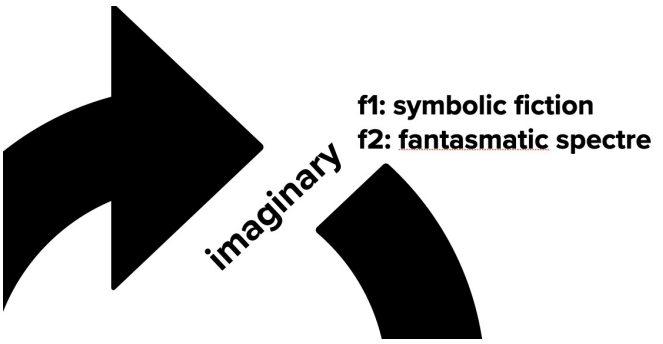

Fig. 2. The Imaginary is the symbolic deployed as fantasy.

Duterte is an EDSA fantasy—the middle-class fantasy of lost agency. The common-sense assumption that the Duterte administration was post-EDSA is wrong. This notion is that of *Dutertismo*—a reading or interpretation of Duterte's brand of politics right from the start of his administration. Its analysts insist that the Duterte administration was a post-EDSA regime, that is, a regime that has broken with the continuity of the EDSA administrations (see Curato).

On the one hand, all governments after EDSA are post-EDSA. The claim in this paper is that EDSA was new, and its truth was, and still is, in Badiou's paradigm, a hole in our political knowledge (*Manifesto* 136). Whatever we know of EDSA are fantasies—the deployment of the old and traditional political knowledge to explain away the void that was EDSA. But on the other hand, there are continuities—from the fundamentally unchanged state institutions and practices (the military and police, anti-insurgency strategy and techniques, etc.), the preservation and revival of old political dynasties, to the continuous persecution of the organized poor—through the Cory Aquino regime to the Duterte administration. Here, we can say that Duterte was enabled by the Aquino post-EDSA regime and all the governments that came after. We can also say that the fantasy that sustained the Duterte state of terror was the culmination of a fantasy production that started with the first symbolic fiction that stood in for the void of EDSA: *people power*.

Was (and is) "people power" an ideology? The void that was EDSA—more simply understood as the failure of existing knowledge to recognize and understand what is new precisely because it is new (Badiou, *Being* 178-83)—was ephemeral because it was filled-in or covered not long after, and its anonymity was replaced by many competing accounts in persistent and zealous knowledge production. These accounts are fantasies in place of the void of EDSA. First, as symbolic fictions that aim to encompass the dangers of the void and weave it back—identified-cohered-ritualized, preferably as a legitimating or rationalizing discourse—into the existing body of knowledge and understanding. What was "people power" after EDSA if not spectacle: reenactments, singing and dancing *artistas*, political speeches, commemorative Catholic masses, and so on? EDSA became something that we watched instead of a movement that we did or joined. Second, government after government failure to usher in the change promised by the new that was EDSA required another fantasy—that of a spectre that reinterpreted the failure of people power to change our politics as a terrible impasse, and that identified the culpable shadowy menace behind this failure.

Why must fantasies replace EDSA's truth? Because to confront the void of EDSA is to struggle, to face the abyss of our freedom, to face the truth of our action: that of fulfilling the promise of the new, of changing the political situation according to the new, of making and materializing the new.

Fashioning fantasies for EDSA is always easier and more convenient: Cory Aquino's democratization vs. Marcos, the communists, and military adventurists; Ramos' economic development vs. Marcos, traditional politics, the communists, and separatists; Estrada's poverty reduction vs. the elite, communists, and separatists; Arroyo's strong republic vs. the mass vote, communists, and separatists; Noynoy Aquino's moral government vs. Marcos, the communists, separatists, and so on (see fig. 3). The cases of Marcos, the communists, and separatists as obstructions that prevent EDSA from realizing itself within each government are noteworthy for having been defeated or always being on the verge of defeat yet constantly threatening. Was not the known EDSA—as people power, as a democratic revolution, as the end of Marcos, as economic development, as a strong republic, as *daang matuwid*, etc.—the legitimating discourse of all political regimes post-1986? And were not the putrefying Marcos wax-cadaver, the communists, the masses, corruption, narco-politics, etc. the terrifying monsters that all post-EDSA governments must confront in their quest to deliver the promises of 1986, to deliver EDSA to itself?

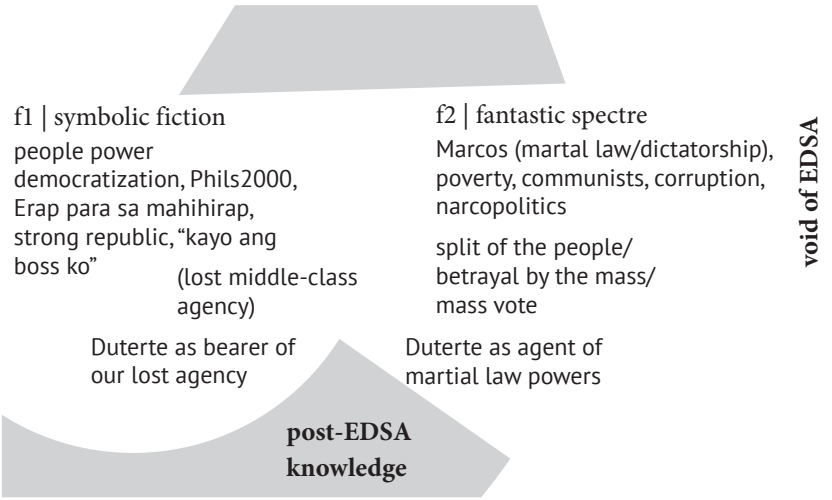

Fig. 3. Fantasies in place of the void of EDSA.

What is obscured in all these is what the disastrous Duterte government unconsciously made very clear: underpinning the transitions from one government to another is the permanency of the state running on normalized emergency powers, and no other evidence for this claim is needed but the sustained experience of state violence by the poor and marginalized. And because the Duterte government offered no consistent or familiar rationalizing fantasy, the untenable situation was primarily justified to our confusion and (guilty) enjoyment, by the second fantasy—the spectres of the narco-state and a drug-crazed society, of rampant criminality and corruption. And no matter how many of the poor were killed, displaced, and

dispossessed, these threats have become fiercer and more severe. Thus, the fearmongering and, as such, overseer of our dread and enjoyment that was the Duterte regime thrived.

What was the encompassing ideology that underpinned the succession of governments after 1986? How was this ideology complicit in the dominance of the Duterte government? Duterte was contingent and not inevitable, but the commonplace explanation of his rise to power—as the perceived alternative to EDSA and its discontents in 2016, and as the apparent change that the post-EDSA governments could not deliver—gave him the weight of inevitability. This explanation seemed to tide us over our years of confused disbelief except that we were left with the pestering question: which EDSA were we frustrated with? This account overlooks what we already know—the post-EDSA regimes were only different from the original Marcos era at the level of legitimating discourse; the political remained dominated by the elite including the returned Marcoses and their cronies. And all of these were buttressed by the continuous situation of state terror that targeted the poor and the marginalized and that increasingly became indiscriminate.

"People power" as a legitimating discourse has faltered since EDSA Dos and EDSA Tres when the imagined unified people of EDSA were split into the middle class and the masses. The masses were blamed—they were easily swayed by showbiz glitter and superstitious messianic promises. But was Duterte's populism the same as Erap's or FPJ's? Populism is, of course, the conventional explanation for Duterte's politics (Abao). It also fits with the supposed cycle of political change in the country (Thompson). And finally, it coheres with the currently popular explanation of a global trend in national authoritarianism (World Politics Review).

Surveys before Duterte's election into power in 2016 show that 62 percent of the ABC class supported him compared to a third of the D and E classes—37 percent and 32 percent, respectively (GMA News Online). This demonstrates that while most of the votes that got Duterte elected were from the more numerous lower classes, the thinking and interests that put him into power were more middle-class and elite. After all, it is obvious to whom a presidential campaign that promised an iron-fisted response to criminality and the proliferation of drugs was addressed. Duterte's anti-drug campaign made explicit the formula that the precarious consumerist middle class and the privileged elite existences were supposed to fear: poverty + drugs = criminality. Consequently, it is not surprising that surveys put criminality as the "top concern" of the middle and upper classes in Duterte's version of authoritarian rule (Suarez). This was the spectral form of what was previously, in 2001 and 2004, the threat of the ignorant masses. It was precisely the middle-class' (and the elite's)

dread of the poor as the uneducated masses who endanger our politics, and as drug-crazed delinquents that endanger the unstable state of the economy that brought us Arroyo in 2004 and Duterte in 2016. We can think of the middle class as a rationalizing fantasy (symbolic fiction) for the neoliberal democratic order. But another way to think of the middle class—as a catch-all liberal concept that subsumes the potential as well as the interests of the poor and the elite—fits its deployment here (Adamovsky).

For it is middle-class fantasy—including but also going beyond the neoliberal fantasies of (1) economic well-being as consumption and (2) imperiled by precarity (Tolentino)—that completes our account of how Duterte dominated our reality. Our middle-class fantasy is fundamentally political: it traces itself from the newness of EDSA and the political spins/knowledge production that filled the gap in the political understanding of the time—providing reason and, thus, legitimacy to all post-EDSA governments. It is how the middle class imagined itself as the powerful "people" of the 1986 uprising post-2001. It is how the middle class filled the discrepancy in this equivalence with the belief that it lost this power during the governments of Arroyo and Aquino III. It is how it found this agency again, albeit possessed and exercised for all of us, in Duterte and his tyrannical rule.

What then was this middle-class fantasy? Fundamentally, it was a fantasy of lost agency. It had its roots in a double misrecognition and a story: (1) in EDSA was the unified Filipino people; and (2) the unified people was the middle class. This unified people was power, had power. EDSA Dos was also a demonstration of this power, but EDSA Tres split the unity of the people. The denizens of this counter-EDSA and counter-to-all-the-democratic values-that-we-hold-dear, who wanted Erap back and who wanted FPJ in his place when their own EDSA failed, were lumped into the "masses." This left the middle class holding the proverbial empty bag, or rather: the middle class left alone and lonely in the vastly expanded lanes of EDSA post-EDSA looked at the mirrored glass walls of malls, condominiums, and offices that now line the avenue and saw the people. This people-as-the-middle-class lost its power. It lost its agency. It stood helpless in the nine years of undemocratic shamelessness of Arroyo's reign. It hoped and was let down by Noynoy Aquino's pedigree-backed candidacy, and by what became the obvious mediocrity of his government. Elite-controlled traditional politics continued to rule the day. Democratic hope was shattered. EDSA lost its meaning. In all these years of not being able to do a thing, the precariousness of middle-class life became more felt. They were, in their eyes, at the receiving end of the brunt of society's business-as-usual: pitiful begging, criminal intent, and actual felonious behavior from the poor masses below; economic exploitation, snobbery, and being left behind by the wealthy oligarchs above. The poor masses reminded the middle class of their

peril; the rich showed them what is always out of reach. But finally, in the 2016 elections, the middle class's lost power and agency shone from the dregs of the usual muck flung and spread around in the presidential campaign. It was wielded by a perceived outsider—the longtime pedigreed politico and strongman Duterte. And this wielding was a promise: I will slash, parry, and lunge with this, your power for you. My unsteady but not-at-all-hesitant hands will be your agency— you will be protected, as the rich have been traditionally protected, from the drug-addled criminality of the poor (see fig. 4).

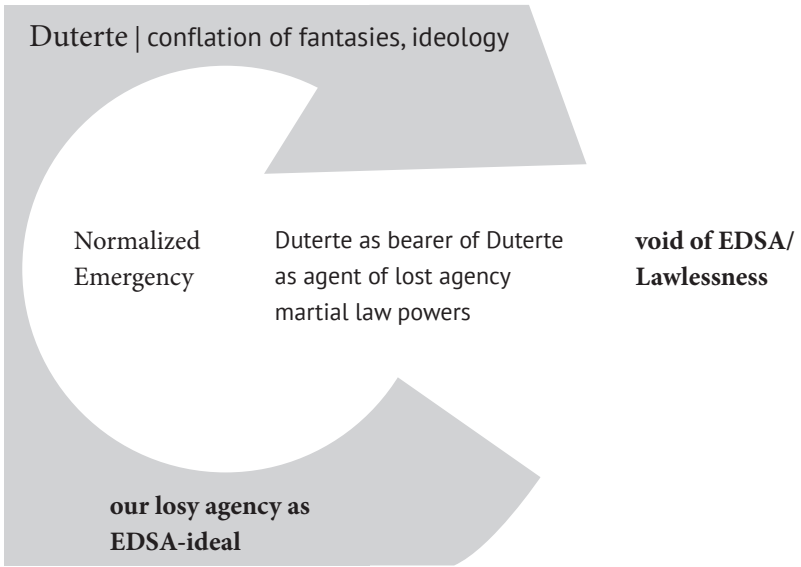

Fig. 4. The conflation of fantasies in Duterte.

Duterte was the name for the continued experience of normalized emergency. The answer to our second question (i.e., What is the meaning of Duterte?), which is Duterte is the name for the continued experience of normalized emergency, will again require us to consider related concepts that are critical to the application of our framework.

Here, we will consider the dynamics that produce the reality of normalized emergency. This process is driven by the liberal demand that the law applies to all. This demand is a response to the threat of martial law (or the state of exception or the state of emergency), that grants full powers to the head of the state through the suspension of the application of the law. Liberals assert that this situation is always open to abuse, the upending of lawful order, and even dictatorship. The driving claim is that the law must be sufficient for the exception. This means that exceptional powers must be encoded into the law and that these powers must be

subject to judicial review (Dyzenhaus, "The Puzzle" 60-61).

This is contrasted with Carl Schmitt's defense of the state of exception as the exemplary sovereign power. For Schmitt, the state's execution of the law forms the lawful order that applies to the normal situation. He also asserts that the state directly guarantees the situation of normality. External to the normality produced by the law and always its present danger, is the *exception*—which also applies to situations of emergency, lawlessness, etc. The exception is the disruption of normality that exposes the limits of the law. This is because the exception is unknown (13). In the theory of law, the exception is when the application of the law does not apply. Schmitt asserts that it is precisely because the exception is unknown that it requires unlimited exceptional powers to address it. The state (or sovereign) decides the exception, affirms the emergency, and declares a state of exception that suspends the law to gain the power or force that is sufficient for the exception (50-51; see Agamben, 1-2).

Liberalism, in response, asserts that the law must strive to be always adequate for the exception. In the first place, the state implements the law but is also ruled by the law. This forms a lawful order that is both a rule by law and a rule of law. Any declaration of martial law or state of exception overturns this lawful order, opening the way for a black box or gray area of powers with no accountability and a predisposition to abuse (Dyzenhaus, "The Puzzle" 2; Ferejohn and Pasquino 223-26). A virtuous cycle of legality must replace the dangers of martial law. This can be done by codifying emergency powers and making sure that these are subject to oversight. This, in turn, ensures that the law is always adequate for the exception (Dyzenhaus, "The Puzzle" 61; Neocleous, "The Problem" 198-99).

Mark Neocleous's work on martial law demonstrates that the liberal demand for the sufficiency of the law to deal with the exception has led to the liberalization of martial law ("Whatever Happened" 13, "The Problem" 200-04). This is characterized by the increase and expansion of possible situations that can be classified as emergency or exceptional, the drastic rise in the forms of available emergency powers codified into the law, and the normalization of emergencies and emergency powers. This was already a global practice among states even before Marcos declared martial law in 1972. In 1963, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reported that over a hundred states of emergency have been declared by Organization of African States members. In 1986, the International Law Association recorded seventy countries that were in one emergency or another. In 1997, a United Nations report found that more than one hundred states have at some point been in a state of emergency since the previous decade (Neocleous, "The Problem" 197-98). In the US, the 1930 New Deal instituted not only "emergency measures

that addressed banking, agriculture, and the general economic crises" but also "military intervention in thirty-one labor disputes deemed emergencies from 1930 to 1935." In 1973, the Senate Special Committee on the Termination of the National Emergency found that the US has been governed under states of emergency for forty years since 1933. After this, the US declared forty more emergencies up to the emergency responses that enabled the War on Terror (Neocleous, "From Martial Law" 505-06).

What this shows is that the liberal demand for the All of Law, which is compelled by the spectre of martial law, structures the experience of reality as a normalized exception (see fig. 5).

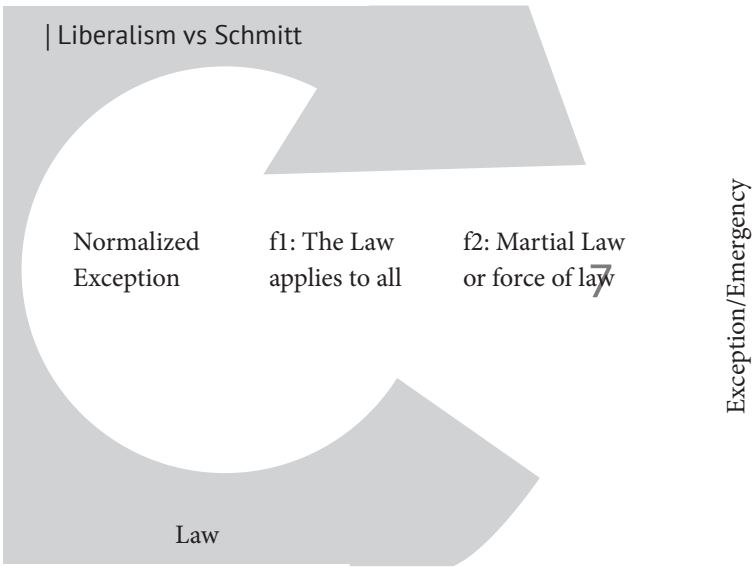

Fig. 5. The liberalization of emergency powers as the dynamics of law and its fantasies.

Is this not what Walter Benjamin was trying to warn us in his eighth thesis in "On the Concept of History"? "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that accords with this insight. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism" (392).

Samantala, dito sa bayan nating sawi: The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) identified fourteen states of emergencies declared in the country since January 31, 1905. The 2005 list includes declarations of emergency by the Commonwealth government during the Second World War, Ferdinand Marcos' 1972 martial law, and the states of emergency declared in response to military

coups in the Cory Aquino and Arroyo governments. Arroyo again declared a state of emergency in 2006 and martial law in the province of Maguindanao in 2009. Duterte's Proclamation No. 55 made it a state of emergency number seventeen. And Proclamation No. 216, which declared martial law in the whole of Mindanao, made the total count eighteen. But in another article on "extraordinary presidential powers," PCIJ also cites instances wherein former presidents Estrada and Arroyo called on the Philippine armed forces to suppress lawless violence ("Introduction to Extraordinary," "A Brief History"). These instances are like Duterte's proclamation of a state of lawlessness that preceded his declaration of martial law. The list excludes declarations of emergency that do not involve armed conflicts. But emergency as contemplated in the 1987 Constitution, includes "rebellion, economic crisis, pestilence or epidemic, typhoon, flood, or other . . . catastrophe of nationwide . . . effect." Indeed, even a state of national calamity empowers the government to deploy the military and police against rioters and looters that follow shortages of food and other necessities (Pamaos and Labao Law Firm).

Dito pa rin sa bayan nating sawi: Republic Act 10973 grants subpoena powers to the Philippine National Police (PNP) chief and the director and deputy director for the administration of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG). The power to subpoena is a means to summon individuals who may shed light on an ongoing investigation. It can also be used to demand books or documents that may be seen as evidence. The law has been defended as returning the power to the PNP as it had subpoena powers during the past Marcos regime when it was still part of the vicious Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police (PC-INP) tandem, both dreaded enforcers of martial law. The law passed through the Senate with the support of the Liberal Party. Even Senator Leila De Lima, a victim of Duterte's normalized emergency powers, voted in favor of the law. Further, the Liberal Party stalwart, Senate minority leader Franklin Drilon believed that there is "every reason to grant such authority to the PNP chief" (Dalangin-Fernandez).

Also, Republic Act 11479 or the Anti-Terror Law is in full deployment to suppress those deemed enemies of the state: the organized left, all legitimate dissent from those of us who dream of a different world, the Lumads, the Dumagats, Negros farmers, the poor and oppressed—always. And unsurprisingly, in July 2020, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported on Drilon's readiness to defend his "tactical" vote for the terror law against anyone (Ramos). Notwithstanding numerous complaints against the law's constitutionality—the terror law is asserted to violate fifteen fundamental rights including freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, the presumption of innocence, and the right against torture and incommunicado detention—the Supreme Court ruled to uphold most sections of the law (Torres-Tupas).

At sa panahon nitong pandemya, the global trend has been more normalization of emergency powers or militarization of ordinary law:

> [O]rdinary powers can become 'extraordinary' in their reach, especially if new norms are enacted, or old legislation reformed, in ways that evade sufficient deliberation or democratic scrutiny… an 'unofficial' state of emergency might thus emerge from ordinary legislation, an outcome which is equally troubling when condoning the severe human rights restrictions that may result from geo-tracking populations, restricting freedom of movement or censoring media. (Torbisco Casals)

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) lists 112 countries with emergency declarations. Meanwhile, 62 countries that may or may not have declared an emergency have measures that affect the freedom of expression, 156 countries have measures that proscribe freedom of assembly, and 61 countries have measures that affect the right to privacy (ICNL, "Freedom Tracker"). Common restrictions of school closures, prohibitions on gatherings, and closures of worship are deployed with or without a declared state of emergency—demonstrating that these extraordinary powers are within reach of ordinary laws (Cortés-Arbeláez).

At dito muli sa bayan nating sawi: Figure 6 shows the stringency of emergency measures applied by the Philippine government against COVID-19 from January 2020 to September 2021. Meanwhile, Figure 7 shows the spread of the disease. It is easy to see that the militarized and policed pandemic response of the government has no obvious effect on the spread of the disease. *Sa mga doktor at nurses, ang virus ang kaaway. Pero sa mga pulis at military, tayong mga mamamayan ang kaaway.*

Fig. 6. COVID-19 Stringency Index, Philippines (Our World in Data).

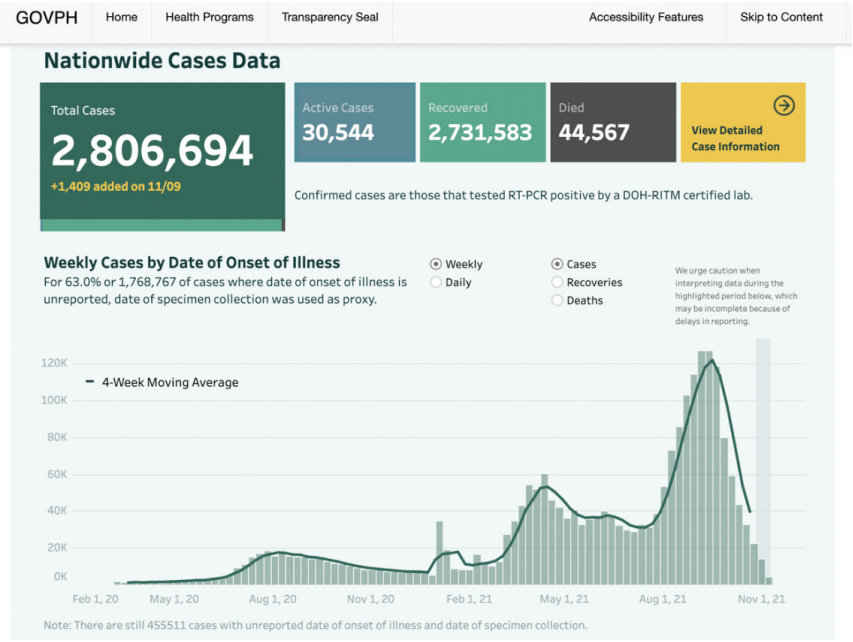

Fig. 7. COVID-19 cases and deaths, Philippines (Department of Health).

What was (and is) the meaning of Duterte? How are the two meanings of Duterte related? We can maintain that the void of EDSA was not simply set against the Marcos dictatorship, but the situation of normalized emergency that prevailed during martial law and that was and still is pervasive worldwide. And we can contend that the continuity of this liberalized exception goes beyond the illusory break between martial law and the post-EDSA political climate. If we insist on this truth of the event of EDSA, we also insist that EDSA was (and is) against the political and the series of governments that it supposedly birthed and legitimized.

The conundrum that was Duterte is thus partly resolved: the disaster of the previous government was but a link in the chain of the history of normalizing emergency and emergency powers. Duterte was enabled precisely by this chain of post-EDSA governments that were dependent on the continuity of the state of normalized emergency. From his appointment as officer-in-charge vice mayor of Davao City by Cory Aquino in 1986 to his election as mayor beginning in 1988, Duterte presided over twenty-two years of brutal rule that was facilitated by death squads responsible for 1,400 killings from 1998 to May 2016 (Marshall and Mogato). Duterte happened in the state of liberalized emergency post-EDSA. It is no surprise that he has presided over this continuously brutal state. Thus, our consternation, our disbelief of what we faced as another authoritarianism is but a denial, a disavowal of the consequences that the impossible demands of liberal democracy have brought us. If EDSA is the

void of normalized emergency, then its truth is a hole in the logic and reason of the state, of its knowledge and administration of this normality. The poor are always at the short end of the structured existence and representation within this normality, perennially blamed for the criminality and disorder that threaten society. It is no revelation, then, that the escalated cases of extra-judicial killings that mainly target the poor (Enano) can be traced back—in salvagings, disappearances, massacres, state terror—to all the regimes post-EDSA, all the way back to the Marcos dictatorship and the rest of our political history.

Duterte as the name of the fantasy of the middle class's lost agency that was found is materially articulated in Duterte as the name of the obscene extraordinary means of continued normalized emergency.

Authoritarianism after authoritarianism. Duterte stepping down and Marcos—son and namesake of the former dictator—stepping up to take the reins of power has come full circle. In this ideological return is an inversion: If after EDSA the Marcoses were the fantasmatic spectre that obstructed goals of development and democratization, EDSA now has become the spectral obstruction to the fulfillment of the promise of the dead Marcos's golden age. But underpinning this latest version of legitimizing fantasy are the same structures of state terror and the same experience of normalized emergency, albeit mantled under the restored catastrophe of the former dictator's name.

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